

Dear Commissioners:

Stop hidden phone fees so I can truly compare prices of phone services. I support the petition filed by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates and endorsed by other consumer advocacy organizations. CG Docket No. 04-208, Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Truth-In-Billing and Billing Format, is long overdue.

Phone bills should be truthful and easy to understand. My mother, who is 82yo and still lives on her own, receives her monthly bill and pays on time every month (and has done so for many, many years). I have been working with her to budget her meager fixed income. When I contacted customer service, at her telephone company, to explain the charges on her telephone bill, I found a monthly charge for the low income elderly. What I was told was, "that's for the elderly people that have a fixed income, to help them out with their bill". Why would they be charging my mother who meets the requirements for a reduced invoice? This is all well and good, for someone like me that doesn't live on a fixed income and IF I AGREED to pay a small portion of my bill to the elderly, but just because my mother has paid her monthly invoice on time, doesn't mean that she should not be able to take advantage of this savings also. There should be some truth when charging customers. Invoices should be easy to read and explainable. What intelligent corporation workers don't understand is that they need to "KISS it" (Keep It Simple Stupid). There are far more under-educated people than there are educated people.

Because this practice is tolerated by the FCC, long distance and wireless phone companies are able to hide the true cost of service. These add-ons make the advertised price of service significantly less than the amount of the check I have to write each month to pay the bill. Competition will not work if consumers cannot accurately compare prices when shopping for service.

Many states are stepping up to address this problem. They should be allowed to proceed. However, the FCC shouldn't shirk its responsibility, nor limit states from doing more.

The FCC should immediately grant the NASUCA petition to investigate billing practices, and prohibit phone and wireless companies from imposing separate monthly fees, line items or surcharges unless expressly mandated by law or the charge is expressly authorized by a governmental authority.